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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALMATY 000887

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (M. O'MARA, J. MUDGE); DRL/PHD (C.
KUCHTA-HELBING)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: PARLIAMENTARIAN, SARSENBAIULY FAMILY
SPEAK OUT ON MURDER

REF: ALMATY 821 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Mark Asquino, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: In separate messages, a prominent parliamentarian and 18 members of Alynbek Sarsenbaiuly's family harshly criticized the course of the investigation and pointed toward political motives behind the murder. The chairman of the international relations committee of the lower house of parliament, Serik Abdrakhmanov, dismissed the official version of events, warned that Utembayev would likely be killed in order to conceal the truth, linked Sarsenbaiuly's murder to Nurkadilov's, and predicted that more blood would be shed if Nazarbayev did not act to uncover the truth. The Sarsenbaiuly family issued a letter claiming that their relative had been killed for his political activity, in particular his criticism of Nazarbayev's family and close associates. They strongly implied that Rakhat Aliyev was behind the killing and, like Abdrakhmanov, rejected the possibility that Utembayev was responsible. In a meeting with post, Sarsenbaiuly's nephew said that the family was "99% sure" that Aliyev was involved in the murder, in retaliation for Sarsenbaiuly's role in his 2001 "exile" to Austria. End summary.

Scathing Appeal from Abdrakhmanov

¶2. (SBU) Mazhilis international relations committee chair and Otan member Serik Abdrakhmanov became the first GOK official to break ranks publicly with Nazarbayev over the investigation of the Sarsenbaiuly murder. In a March 3 letter to the president that was released to the press and widely covered, Abdrakhmanov said that the public was "bewildered" and "outraged" by the official version of events. He called the situation a tragicomedy, claiming that Utembayev was a modest man "who could not give an order to the guards posted outside his office, much less to the elite 'Arystan' group." Abdrakhmanov said that Interior Minister Mukhamedzhanov was well aware of this but had lied due to pressure from above.

¶3. (SBU) Abdrakhmanov stated that Utembayev had "signed his own death sentence" by confessing to the murder, "if he is not dead already." "Only a dead Utembayev cannot tell the truth," he wrote. Noting that Nazarbayev had taken personal responsibility for the investigation and was therefore responsible for uncovering the truth, Abdrakhmanov said it

was his duty to report that people were concerned that Nazarbayev was being betrayed by those in his inner circle. He linked the murders of Sarsenbaiuly and Zamanbek Nurkadilov, saying that both were carried out because the former high-ranking officials knew too much about who in the inner circle was stealing the country's wealth.

¶4. (SBU) The parliamentarian went on to warn that if Nazarbayev does not "defend the TRUTH this time," more blood will flow in the future. "We cannot guarantee peace and stability in society with the help of LIES." He closed by reiterating that Nazarbayev's closest associates were alienating him from the public and from the truth.

¶5. (SBU) Some observers believe that Abdrakhmanov was motivated to take a public stand on the murder due to his clan links with Sarsenbaiuly and Nurkadilov. He was also a member of the very influential Alban tribe, and now in fact may be the most prominent remaining survivor.

Sarsenbaiuly Family Issues Letter

¶6. (SBU) In a similar vein, Sarsenbaiuly's family issued a letter accusing the Minister of Interior of trying to conceal the "political motivation" of the murder, and strongly implying that Deputy FM Rakhat Aliyev was involved. The March 3 letter, signed by 18 members of Sarsenbaiuly's family, including his mother and father, was addressed to the embassies of the U.S., the UK, Austria, and Finland, as well as to the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the OSCE. In the letter, Sarsenbaiuly's relatives recalled

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his harsh criticism since 2001 of Nazarbayev's family and associates. They highlighted in particular his confrontation with Rakhat Aliyev and Dariga Nazarbayeva. They also noted the fact that Aliyev was formerly the deputy head of the KNB, whose operatives have been charged in connection with the crime. They characterized the premise that Utembayev had ordered the murder for personal reasons as absurd, and alleged that the police had questioned the family harshly with the goal of attributing the murder to family problems or financial difficulties. The Sarsenbaiuly family compared the GOK's tactics in repressing the opposition to the Soviet purges of the 1930s.

And Goes Further in Private

¶7. (C) In a March 6 meeting with post's energy officer, Sarsenbaiuly's nephew Nurtas Sarsenbayev (protect), one of the signers of the letter, was more frank. He stated that the family is "99% sure" that Rakhat Aliyev was "involved" in the murder. He explained that Aliyev was motivated by Sarsenbaiuly's key role in getting him exiled from Kazakhstan in 2001. Sarsenbaiuly had provided convincing evidence to Nazarbayev that Aliyev was using his KNB position to gather compromising information on influential people with the goal of succeeding Nazarbayev. As a result, Aliyev was "exiled" to Vienna and Sarsenbaiuly was sent to Moscow. Sarsenbayev claimed that Aliyev had subsequently threatened Sarsenbaiuly with revenge.

¶8. (C) Sarsenbayev said that the family does not believe that Utembayev had ordered the murder or had any motive to do so. He noted that the article, written years ago when Sarsenbaiuly was ambassador in Moscow, had not even referred to Utembayev by name. Utembayev had never contacted Sarsenbaiuly to complain about it, and had suffered no negative impact to his career as a result. Sarsenbayev claimed that in fact his uncle and Utembayev had a relatively close relationship. He also claimed that to the best of his knowledge, the police had not interviewed any of

Sarsenbaiuly's relatives subsequent to Utembayev's arrest in order to question them about relations between the two men.

¶9. (C) Sarsenbayev speculated that Utembayev had been forced to confess because "someone has something on him." He added that someone may have instructed Utembayev to conduct a business deal with Ibragimov, who Sarsenbayev described as a "protege of Aliyev," which he did, not realizing he was being set up for a murder rap. He claimed that while Utembayev was a member of the State Planning Committee, he had traveled abroad and opened a bank account for for Kazakhgate proceeds.

¶10. (C) Sarsenbayev added that the family believes that Nazarbayev is involved to some degree, but offered no concrete proof. He claimed that Nazarbayev had been involved in other opposition cases such as Nurkadilov's death, and was therefore a "prisoner of palace insiders" with no room to maneuver on this issue.

Comment

¶11. (C) Comment: The frank and scathing nature of Abdrakhmanov's appeal to Nazarbayev came as a surprise. Although he has publicly criticized certain policies and Nazarbayev associates in the past, Abdrakhmanov may have crossed a very significant red line with his criticism of the investigation and his allegations against Nazarbayev's inner circle. It is highly likely that there will be repercussions for his career, although probably not immediately. The remarks recall Zharmakhan Tuyakbay's statements before leaving the Mazhilis and the pro-presidential Otan party; it is possible that Abdrakhmanov may soon follow in his footsteps.

¶12. (C) Comment, cont: Despite continuing allegations of a coverup and political theories for hte murder, there is still no evidence to substantiate any involvement by either the president or anyone in his immediate circle. End comment.
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